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C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 000176

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/28/2018
TAGS: PREL PGOV CU PM
SUBJECT: PANAMA: TORRIJOS CONGRATULATES RAUL

Classified By: POLCOUNS Brian R. Naranjo. Reason: 1.4 (d)

Summary and Comment

11. (C) Panamanian President Martin Torrijos extended his "sincere congratulations" to Cuban President Raul Castro for his "well deserved designation to the highest government position in the Republic of Cuba, as a result of the very right and unanimous decision by the honorable Cuban General Assembly," an MFA press release announced on February 27. The press release expressed the desire to "strengthen even more during" Raul Castro's term the "frank relationships of friendship and cooperation that currently exist. The letter was sent on February 24. This glowing statement is in keeping with the Torrijos Administration's continuing desire to refrain from doing anything that would alienate Cuba. Continuing to present itself to the USG as a "bridge" to Cuba, Panama is also unlikely to do anything public that would cause it to incur Cuban wrath or even discomfort. The use of the term "frank" is curious, as there appears to be a lack of candor in the Cuba-Panamanian bilateral relationship.
End summary and comment.

Text of MFA Press Release

12. (U) Begin unofficial translation of MFA press release:

Panama, February 27, 2008

The National Government transmitted a congratulatory message to the new President of the Republic of Cuba, Raul Castro Ruz, on the occasion of this inauguration last Sunday, February 24.

The note was signed by President Martin Torrijos Espino, and it extends the sincere congratulations from the people and government of Panama on the occasion of the "well deserved designation to the highest government position in the Republic of Cuba, as a result of the very right and unanimous decision by the honorable Cuban General Assembly."

"I will see with great pleasure how the frank relationships of friendship and cooperation that happily exist between Cuba and Panama strengthen even more during your term," stated the presidential message sent through the Ministry of Foreign Relations.

The president of our country wishes President Castro Ruz that "the ambitious government plan that you have designed could

be carried out for the well-being and happiness of the heroic and fighting people of Cuba."

End unofficial translation.

ARREAGA